



Legislator Alert

To inform and educate our Legislators about important

Behavioral Health Issues

February 4, 2011

Drug Courts: Our Best Return

This session, budget hearings are being held to determine whether to reduce the funding for Montana's community-based drug courts by 35%. There are many reasons why this is bad economics. Drug Courts have the largest cost-benefit ratio of any other rehabilitative intervention in the criminal justice system. For every \$1.00 invested in a Drug Court participant, \$7.00-\$9.00 are saved within the criminal justice and healthcare systems. Even larger impacts occur in reducing court calendars, incarceration and recidivism. Montana cannot afford to reduce its commitment to these important courts!

Criminal Drug Courts in particular, have had a definite impact upon the lowering cost of arrest, processing, incarceration, judicial time and probation/parole. Outcome findings from the Billings Adult Misdemeanor Drug Court in Billings are showing enormous progress in driving down recidivism rates. This court is Montana's largest & includes non-violent drug addicted misdemeanor and DUI offenders.

Employment Status Changes of Drug Court Clients

Client Status	On Admission	After 6 Months
Employed	21.4%	100%
Unemployed	72.7%	-0-

Average Amount of Money Spent Before vs. After Drug Court

Alcohol	Maximum	Mean
Admission	\$1200	\$167.05
Follow-Up	-0-	-0-
Drugs	Maximum	Mean
Admission	\$7000	\$388.10
Follow-Up	\$20	\$1.76

The Billings Drug Court has been in operation six years and during this time, incarceration levels have decreased dramatically. As a diversion program, Drug Courts have been successful in reducing recidivism rates nationally by 83.6%. If Montana wants to stop growing jail and prison beds, drug courts are the best solution. Solid community-based diversion programs such as Drug Courts and Rimrock Foundation's Jail-Based Treatment Project are actively reducing the census at the Yellowstone County Detention Center by 30% annually.

The facts suggest our current practice of repeated incarceration of misdemeanor offenders has failed. Approximately 70% of drug offenders will be re-incarcerated without some form of ongoing treatment.

DRUG COURTS REDUCE RECIDIVISM

Normally, the Yellowstone County jail population consists of nearly 40% misdemeanor offenders who have addiction-related offenses. Often they have committed so many misdemeanor offenses they have jail terms up to one year. When a drug court is actively involved, offenders undergo 12-18 months of addiction treatment, life skills training, and judicial supervision.

Percent of Clients Incarcerated

On Admission	After 6 Months
93.5%	10.0%

SUMMARY

Studies have shown that drug courts significantly increase the time drug abusers stay in treatment.

An average of 70% of drug court clients complete at least 12 months of treatment, whereas only 20 percent of probationers and parolees remain for a year in community treatment programs.

The Office of Government Accounting reports that the net predicted benefit of drug courts is \$1000 to \$15,000 per drug court participant.

For the small investment of general fund monies, drug courts are clearly a best buy!

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Rimrock Foundation is Montana's oldest and largest private, non-profit treatment center. Rimrock has more than forty-two years of experience in treating people who suffer from compulsive disorders and their families. Through that experience we have developed one of the most effective nationally-recognized treatment programs available today.

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